

Biographical Sketch

... of ...

Alexander MacMurphy, Jr.

Of Londonderry, N. H.

1728 -- 1763



Prepared by the

Rev. Jesse G. MacMurphy

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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

of Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., who was born in Londonderry, N. H., lived in the easterly part of the town, lived at Amoskeag and in the Neck at Massabesic, Married and had children, made a will and died in 1763; buried in first burial ground, a stone and inscription found at the grave at this time, November 5, 1915.

Birth and Childhood.

Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., was the fourth in order of six children born to the Charter Alexander MacMurphy of Londonderry, N. H. The record of his birth and parentage are found in the first volume of Town Records. He was the son of Alexander and Jenet MacMurphy of the easterly part of the town, born on the home lot of fifty acres, laid out to Alexander MacMurphy and James Liggett, as a half right in March 1722. Why each of them was not entitled to a full home lot is not apparent. Two charter proprietors of the town had only one half of a homelot between them. But for diverse good causes the same year, September 1, 1722, James Liggett conveyed by deed his

share of the fifty acre homestead, and the meadows belonging to the right, to Alexander MacMurphy. This homestead was in the Three Quarter Mile Range, which was a series of homesteads, each two hundred and forty rods in length, and of widths to make up the requisite number of acres. The longest lines ran due east and west, and the shortest ran due north and south. These lines, largely marked by stonewalls, remain to day practically unchanged. Alexander MacMurphy's homelot of fifty acres was bounded on the north by one of the numerous farms of Lieutenant Governor John Wentworth; and on the south by a second division of land laid out to his brother, Squire John MacMurphy.

The first wife of Alexander MacMurphy is presumed to have been a near relative of James Liggett, perhaps a daughter, but probably a sister, Jean Liggett. For there is no evidence that James Liggett was married and had children, whereas at his death in 1760 his last will and testament mentions only brothers and sisters for legacies.

That Alexander MacMurphy had six children, that lived to mature years, is known from the deeds made by five of them, and from the records of birth of four of

them, and by the family traditions. The two children of the first wife, Jean Liggett, were George MacMurphy born 1720, and John MacMurphy born about 1722, the date of the Londonderry royal charter. Their mother died in 1724, and their father married again, but no record is found. But the records proceed to give the births of four children to Alexander and Jenet MacMurphy; Jean MacMurphy 1726, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., the subject of this sketch, born April 1, 1728, Daniel MacMurphy 1731 and James MacMurphy 1734. The exact dates of the others are given in other sketches. All of this preliminary history is given here to clearly identify this Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., and not get him mixed up with two other Alexander MacMurphys of Londonderry, one the son of Squire John MacMurphy born in 1717, the other the son of Archibald MacMurphy born 1729.

As a Young Man.

Alexander MacMurphy Jr.'s father, Alexander MacMurphy, was drowned February 19, 1734, in the Powow river at Kingston. His mother Jenet MacMurphy, appointed administratrix of his estate the same year but declined to serve, and petitioned the

Court to appoint Squire John MacMurphy, her late husband's brother, to serve in her stead. The real estate was left undivided as all the children were under legal age. And so Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., six years of age, was the heir to one sixth of the estate, after the dower of the mother was settled. It does not appear that she received anything out of the real estate, as no record of the widow has been found it may be presumed, that she either accepted personal property in settlement of right of dower, or that she died before children reached the age of twenty-one.

Again, in reference to the rights of the eldest son no records appear, but it is evident, that when he came of age he had transferred all his rights, one sixth of the real estate to his next brother, John MacMurphy. In 1750, Jean MacMurphy, the third child, conveyed by deed all her right, title and interests in the estate of her honored father, Alexander MacMurphy, being one sixth part to her brother, the fourth child, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr. The consideration for her sixth part in 1750 was 140 pounds. In 1755, Daniel MacMurphy, the fifth child, conveyed by deed all his right, title and interests in the estate of his

honored father, Alexander MacMurphy, to his brother, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., consideration 370 lbs. Then Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., had possession of three sixths of the estate; his own, Jean's and Daniels.

In 1757, the second child, John MacMurphy, was dead, leaving a widow. John MacMurphy was the owner of two sixths of the estate; his own and George's part, Alexander MacMurphy was appointed administrator to his brother John's estate, and that year conveyed by deed the right, title and interests that John MacMurphy, shipwright of Boston, deceased, possessed at the time of his death, to James MacMurphy of Londonderry. His part was two sixths of the estate and the consideration was 140 lbs, but there was a reservation, in the deed of these pieces of real estate, of the right of dower of the widow of John MacMurphy. It was planned that Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., should have the whole of the real estate, and so immediately James MacMurphy, who now had three sixths; his own and the shares of both George and John MacMurphy, conveyed by deed three sixths of the estate of his honored father, Alexander MacMurphy, to his brother.

Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., reserving the right of dower of the widow of John MacMurphy. The consideration was 450 pounds.

And so we find, that November 29, 1757 when Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., was about twenty-nine years of age, he had come into the possession of the fifty acre home lot, the one hundred ten acre second division, two other lots with rights, two meadows, farm at Amoskeag, and some sawmill rights, but there was reserved a right of dower to the widow of his brother John, and his right to a lot in a new township called number Six, Henniker

Amoskeag Farm

The John Wheelwright Deed of October 20, 1719 gave the settlers of Nutfield a long boundary upon the east bank of the Merrimack River, and they began very early to take possession of the most desirable parts, of the region about the Amoskeag Falls, and northward to the Isle of Hooksett, and southward as far as the mouth of Cohas brook. But when the Royal Charter for the town of Londonderry was obtained June 1, 1722, it was found to be quite different in many respects from the previous deed. And those people of the colony, who

had taken up farms adjacent to the fishing places at Amoskeag Fall, were settling upon a strip of land between the chartered bounds of the town of Londonderry and the Merrimack River. The strip of land on which they settled was called Old Harry Town, and eventually was incorporated by the name of Derryfield; and out of this Settlement has grown the city of Manchester.

Potters History of Manchester speaks of the emigrants from Londonderry settling very early on that strip of land. John Ridell settled upon what is called the Ray Farm, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., lived next above John McNeill, opposite the Amoskeag Falls bridge, Archibald Stark settled upon what is now known as the Stark place. There was another Alexander MacMurphy who occupied a farm at the outlet of the Massabesic. The relationship of these two Alexander MacMurphy's is readily determined. It is not to be presumed that these men were father and son, for several reasons, Alexander MacMurphy, the father of Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., was drowned in 1734, when the son was only six years old; but father and son had no opportunity to occupy two farms in Old

Harry Town at the same time. The historian was quite right in the statement of occupation of farm at Amoskeag Falls by Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., but he was not of age till 1749, only two years before the incorporation of Derryfield. The other Alexander MacMurphy, occupying a farm at the outlet of Lake Massabesic, was the son of Squire John MacMurphy, and was twenty one years old in 1738, and his father gave him a deed of that farm, the large island and the smaller ones in the lake, and mill privilege on the Cohas brook, just below Massabesic, in 1750. His father had possessed the mill privilege, farm and island ten years before the deed. It cannot be made to appear, that these farms were actually used, or cultivated, much before incorporation in 1751.

Archibald Stark is named as having a farm at or near Amoskeag Falls, at a very early period; but as for the actual removal of his family from Londonderry, it did not occur till the year 1736. In the case of Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., it may be questioned whether he ever had a permanent or legal resident at Amoskeag Falls, for his place of residence was chiefly if not wholly in Londonderry, and mainly

in the original house and homelot of his farther, but when he married Isabella Craig of Chester it is possible that he took up his residence elsewhere; not outside the town, but in the northern part of the town. The Chase History of Chester makes him to have lived in several places in the Neck at Massabesic. There were three Alexander MacMurpheys of voting age in Londonderry in 1750 and for some years after.

Londonderry Records.

At a general town meeting March 5, 1726. "It is voted on the above said day that the proprietors are satisfied and design to lay out a THIRD division of land and that the third division be laid out fifty acres to each proprietor that has a full right in the town, and that said land shall be laid out quantity and quality to be considered by the committee, that shall be chosen to lay out the same. And it is further voted on the aforesaid day that there shall be three men chosen for a committee to lay out the third divisions of land beside the surveyor. The names of the men as followeth, John Mitchell, Thomas Steele, John MacMurphy.xxx It is also voted that the

town choose for surveyor to lay out the third divisions of land, David Cargell, Jr.. This goes to show conclusively the intention of the town in reference to the third division of land at this date. The situation of the land is shown by the vote of the town October 24, 1726, to lay out a convenient road to Amoskeag. This was a considerable expense and would not have been undertaken if the amount of travel had not warrant the expense.

"At a town meeting held November 14, 1726, the town chose for moderator, James Alexander. It is voted on the aforesaid day that the third division of land is to be laid out on the River of Merrimack, from the lower end of the intervale at Netticook, and so upon the aforesaid River as far as the committee that lays out the third division shall think good for the public benefit of the said settlement.

It is also voted on the aforesaid day that every four proprietors in this town shall settle one inhabitant on the one fourth lot throughout the whole settlement of the third division of land, and every person that will not comply with this vote shall join together and take their rights in the one end of the aforesaid settlement, and if they lose their rights through a course

of law in their own default, by non-settling their third division, they shall lose it to themselves, and the town shall not be obliged to make up their third division to these men"

These third divisions along the Merrimack River were laid out on the doubtful validity of the Wheelwright deed to the Nutfield Colony and that land was not included in Londonderry. However the third divisions were taken up fifty acres for whole rights quantity and quality, and Alexander MacMurphy of Nutfield and Londonderry by virtue of a half right in the charter had a farm with the others on the Merrimack River, and his house was at Amoskeag Falls and he lived there sufficiently to comply with legal requirements and the vote of the town November 14, 1726.

There is strong probability that he lived there when the charter of Londonderry was granted, June 1, 1722 and that the two oldest children, George MacMurphy and John MacMurphy, were born there; and so the record of their births did not reach the town clerk of Londonderry. Old Harry's Town became Derryfield in 1751, and Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., was still reckoned as a resident and

voter of Londonderry. The Alexander MacMurphy, who was so conspicuous in early records of Derryfield for twenty-six years, was a son of Squire John MacMurphy.

His Marriage.

Alexander MacMurphy of Londonderry married Isabel Craig of Chester, a daughter William and Jean Craig of Chester. This is stated in Benjamin Chase's History of Chester. There are other reasons for giving credit to the statement of the historian, although record of marriage is not found. In the oldest burying ground in Londonderry, now Derry is a gravestone for Jane Craig, daughter of William and Jean Craig of Chester, who died October 6, 1745, aged 18 years. Within a few feet is the grave and stone of Alexander MacMurphy, who died January 8, 1763 aged 35 years. The three groups of the family are buried in close proximity, those of John MacMurphy, those of Alexander MacMurphy and those of Archibald MacMurphy. Again in the last will and Testament of Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., we discover the relationship, and in the adoption and bringing up of the son, James MacMurphy by his grandfather

William Craig of Chester. The lack of information about the births of children to Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., and Isabel Craig is partly accounted for by their unsettled residence and by his early disease. But from certain facts dates and payments of legacies and charges, the following is believed to be correct: the children were William MacMurphy, John MacMurphy, James MacMurphy and Jane MacMurphy. Three of these, John, James and Jane married persons of the name Graham.

John MacMurphy of Londonderry born about 1756 married Sarah Graham of Chester, a daughter of William Graham and Margaret Aiken.

James MacMurphy married Margaret Graham, daughter of James Graham of Chester, and Jane MacMurphy was married to James Graham of Chester. The Graham connections were numerous, and the social qualities of these relations were so prominent as to be quite traditional in the later generations. There are reminiscences extant of the families whereas there are descendants.

Occupations

When Jean MacMurphy, spinster, in 1750 quitclaimed her interest in her honored father, Alexander MacMurphy, estate to her brother, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., she called his occupation that of Husbandman; and it perhaps implies that he was following the business of cultivating the land for a living; he was twenty-two years of age only and probably still unmarried. He is very likely to have been employed a large part of the time on the farms at Amoskeag, perhaps catching salmon or ferrying parties to their fishing grounds on small islands.

When Daniel MacMurphy quitclaimed to his brother Alexander MacMurphy in 1755, he designated him as yeoman, and that leaves much room for conjecture as to his employment. He was a fur holder, he was next a gentleman, a retailer. In this deed mention is made of the quarter part of a lot of land lying upon or near the Amoskeag Falls.

When James MacMurphy quitclaimed to his brother Alexander MacMurphy in June 1756 his claim to one quarter of land at or near Amoskeag Falls, he designated him

still as YOEMAN; the land was discribed by courses and called thirteen acres.

And again when James MacMurphy quit-claimed the one half of his honored Ethers estate to his brother Alexander MacMurphy in 1757 he continued to class him as yoe-man. In all these transactions there is implied, that Alexander MacMurphy's occupation was diversified; he was tilling the soil when he was not occupied in looking after several pieces of real estate, watching the fishing places on his land at Amoskeag, and probably trading to some extent in the products of the fishing privileges. He was at the Amoskeag Falls enough to satisfy the assertion, that Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., of Londonderry lived on a farm on the east side of the Merrimack River, at Amoskeag Falls, between the farms of John McNeill and John Ridell.

His Last Will and Testament.

Alexander MacMurphy was yet a young man when he came to the knowledge that his work was nearly finished. The following copy of his last Will and Testament must conclude this sketch.

"In the name of God, Amen, I Alexander MacMurphy of Londonderry in the Province

of New Hampshire, yeoman, being sick and weak of body but of perfect mind and memory, thanks be given to God therefor, and calling to the mortality of my body, and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die, do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament, principally and first I give and bequeath my soul to God that gave it to me, and my body to the dust to be buried in a Christian manner at the discretion of my executors, doubting not but at the general resurrection I shall receive the same by the Almighty powers of God, and as touching what it has pleased God to bless me with in this world I give and bequeath in manner following:

First I allow all my just debts and funeral charges to be paid out of my estate.

Item, I give and bequeath my whole estate both real and personal to my beloved wife, Isabel to be disposed by her will as she shall think fit for the good of my family, either to keep it or to sell it as she thinks best for the bringing up and use of her family, and if she should think best to sell it, then I allow her to have full power to dispose of it and execute deeds of the same and I make and ordain my well beloved wife Isabel MacMurphy to be my ex-

centrix of this my last Will and Testament
revoking and disallowing all other wills,
testaments or bequeathments whatsoever,
allowing this and no other to be my last
will and testament

Signed, sealed published and pronounced
to be his last will and testament in presence
of us.

Robert MacMurphy,
James MacMurphy,
Robert Craige.

{ L.S. }

Alexander MacMurphy.

A true copy attest:

Andrew J. Brown, Register.

Proved June 25, 1763.

Disposition of his estate.

About six years after the decease of Alexander MacMurphy his widow concluded to sell the real estate.

Isabelle MacMurphy, relict of Alexander MacMurphy late of Londonderry, executor to the estate and testament for 150 pounds, conveyed to John Craige and James MacMurphy these tract of land in Londonderry, fifty acres bounded by Patrick Douglass, Robert MacMurphy, John and Daniel Hunter, also a meadow, White Rock, bounded on John and Daniel Hunters meadows also

one fourth part of a fourth division in Londonderry drawn to the original sight of James Liggett, also a tract of land, amendment, bounded on Archibald MacMurphy, Charter line, John Reside, Samuel Wilson, Thomas Wilson, witnesses to deed.

Robert MacMurphy,

Mathew Thornton,

Signed November 22, 1769.

Isabella MacMurphy, (s)

The sale of these tracts of land was in accordance with the last will and testament, but John Craige his brother did not want the land, he was not married, James MacMurphy her brother-in-law did not want the land as he had already settled elsewhere; but the two men helped the widow to turn the land into money, and Robert MacMurphy, cousin, and Doctor Matthew Thornton, probably recommended the sale. The identity of this man Alexander MacMurphy, and widow Isabella MacMurphy is determined beyond a question by the identity of the fifty acre homestead, the White Rock Meadow, the amendment land, the right of James Liggett. The body of Alexander MacMurphy 1728-1763, son of Charter Alexander MacMurphy, was buried in the first burying ground of Londonderry;

there was placed a modest gravestone with simple inscription, reciting that he died January 8, 1963, aged 33 years.

There are a couple of lines of faith expressed in verse upon the stone.

"This my dust shall rise again

And praise my God in joyful strain,"

